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## ACE is driving force for new capabilities to warfighter *from AFMC News Service*

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio (AFMCNS) — Laying the cornerstone for a top-to-bottom reform of how the service develops and buys weapons systems, the Air Force opened a new Acquisition Center of Excellence (ACE) Dec. 10.

The ACE's primary mission is to help acquisition professionals cut through burdensome, unproductive processes that slow the fielding of new warfighting capabilities.

The new office, led by a senior executive service member, also will be the driving force for implementing "Agile Acquisition," a sweeping series of initiatives designed to streamline the Air Force's acquisition systems. The plan was endorsed at a meeting of the Air Force's four-star generals and senior civilians in November.

"Our acquisition system must be as agile and flexible as our warfighters," said secretary of the Air Force James Roche. "It must identify the right targets and the best practices that enable us to provide the most cost-effective systems to the field. This Acquisition Center of Excellence is an ideal forum to deliver these results."

The major thrusts of Agile Acquisition are captured in six new reform-oriented "Lightning Bolts" Air Force acquisition leaders developed. They are:

- **Results, Not Process** — A wholesale assault on non-value-added processes, under the Air Force's control, that slow the acquisition process.
- **Spiral: Success in Increments** — An Air Force-wide initiative to synchronize spiral development efforts across the requirements, resources, development, testing, and sustainment communities.
- **Roadblock Buster** — Using the ACE to cut through red tape and, where necessary, to speed acquisition, to issue waivers to non-productive Air Force processes.
- **Breeding Innovators** — A comprehensive effort to train acquisition professional, to be innovators, and to replace risk aversion with risk management.
- **Program Executive Office/Services Contracts** — A central source of guidance, assistance, and policy development for Air Force services contracts, which now account for nearly half of all acquisition dollars.
- **Idea Pipeline** — A drive to establish better conduits for exchanging ideas, innovations, and best business practices be-



*CENTER IS DRIVING FORCE — Marvin Sambur, assistant secretary (acquisition), Darleen Druyun, principal deputy assistant secretary (acquisition management), Gen. Lester Lyles, commander, Air Force Materiel Command, and William Maikisch, executive director, space and missile command, preside over the ribbon cutting marking the launch of the new Acquisition Center of Excellence. (Air Force photo)*

tween industry and the Air Force.

"My charge from the secretary is to foster a culture of innovation and reasonable risk taking," said Dr. Marvin Sambur, assistant secretary of the Air Force for acquisition. "Only if we do this will we be able to shorten acquisition cycle times, insert new technologies into systems throughout their life cycles, and deliver today's technology today."

"Agile Acquisition provides the strategy to do just that. The Lightning Bolts provide the roadmap, and the new ACE gives us the tools to succeed," Sambur said. "We want to work closely with our industrial partners to mine their best ideas to develop both an agile and credible acquisition process."

While headquartered at the Pentagon, the ACE will work closely with Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC) and Air Force Space Command, the two Air Force commands which acquire most major systems.

"The changes Agile Acquisition will demand are revolutionary! That's as it should be. Our world, and our mission,

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have changed radically in the past few months,” said Gen. Lester Lyles, commander of AFMC. “We must change with it to ensure we provide the warfighter a responsive and effective acquisition system that meets his changing needs.”

Lyles pointed out that Agile Acquisition will mesh perfectly with AFMC’s Enterprise Management initiative.

“These two efforts will work together to take us where we need to go to keep America’s warfighters the most powerful and respected force in the world,” he said.

The need to free the acquisition community to accept reasonable risk and innovate is crucial to the Air Force’s continued success, according to Gen. John Jumper, Air Force chief of staff. The requirements and development processes simply have to be more responsive, he said, and the ACE will play a major role in making that happen.

“We may — actually we know we will — make some mistakes along the way; that’s OK,” Jumper said. “Our unbridled fear of mistakes is costing us far more than any sensible risk taking ever will.”

Implementing the Lightning Bolts is on a “very aggressive” schedule, said Darleen Druyun, principal deputy assistant secretary, acquisition management. She said she is particularly intent on stripping from Air Force regulations any “non-value-added” processes that are not required by law.

“Too often, we complain that the law requires us to do this or to do that, when in fact it’s our own regulations implementing the law that are the culprits,” she said. “Sometimes, we are our own worst enemies. That is about to change.

“We need to get on with this. If there’s a consensus on anything in the area of acquisition reform, it’s that there’s been more than enough study. It’s time for action.” @